

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 NIC-01 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 MBFR-03 GAC-01 RSR-01

/127 W

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R 301500 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 7617

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMCONSUL MILAN

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

/ AMEMBASSY ROME 1007

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3525

E. O. 1165 2: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, UR

SUBJ: SOVIET ATTITUDE TOWARD GREECE

REF: ATHENS 1859 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: WE DO NOT FIND AS MUCH WARMTH IN SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF GREECE AS DOES ATHENS PRESS AND VIEW THIS YEAR'S PRESSE TREATMENT OF GREEK NATIONAL DAY AS CONTINUATION OF OLD THEME REGARDING MOSCOW'S READINESS FOR GOOD RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SHIFT IN ONE COMMENTARY, MOST AUTHORITATIVE PRAVDA COMMENTARY CONTINUES HARD LINE AGAINST GREEK GOVERNMENT BY CONDEMNING NATO TIES AND TREATMENT OF POLITICAL DISSIDENTS. PERHAPS EVEN MORE INTERESTING THAN RELEASE OF MODEST SOVIET TRIAL BALLOON IS ALACRITY AND APPARENT ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH GREEK PRESS ZEROED IN ON IT. END SUMMARY.

2. PRAVDA MARCH 25 ARTICLE ON ANNIVERSARY, CONTRARY TO ATHENS PRESS (REFTEL), TAKES TOUGH LINE. GREEK REGIME IS CONDEMNED FOR PUTTING GREEK TERRITORY AT DISPOSAL OF "MOST MILITANTLY
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INCLINED NATO CIRCLES" AND FOR CONVERTING PIIRAEUR INTO "PERMANENT BASE FOR SIXTH FLEET." IN GIVING US NAVY BASE, ATHENS REGIME IS ACCUSED OF HAVING DONE WHAT PREVIOUS GREEK GOVERNMENTS HAD NOT RISKED DOING EVEN IN DAYS OF MARSHALL PLAN AND TRUMAN DOCTRINE.

3. A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT SIGNAL, REGARDED AS POSSIBLY SIGNIFICANT BY GREEK EMBASSY, WAS GIVEN A WEEK AGO IN ARTICLE IN MARCH 23 ISSUE OF WEEKLY NEW TIMES. ARTICLE QUOTES GREEK DEP FORN MIN KAVALIERATOS AS SAYING HELSINKI TALKS OPEN TO GREECE " POSSIBILITY FOR WIDER COOPERATION WITH SOVIET UNION, IN SAME MANNER AS WITH ALL OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES." NEW TIMES ALSO QUOTES KAVALIERATOS THAT GREECE " PREFERES TO FORGET PAST DIFFICULTIES WHICH EXISTED IN RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES." SOVIET ARTICLE ATTACHES CAVEAT, HOWEVER, THAT " SOVIET UNION IS READY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THOSE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITH WHOM RELATIONS ARE NOT YET ON THE BEST OF TERMS IF FROM THEIR SIDE THERE IS DEMONSTRATED IN FACT A READINESS FOR THIS."

4. WHILE SOME STEPS LIKE GREEK/ SOVIET AIR AND RAIL AGREEMENTS POINT TO DESIRE ON BOTH SIDES TO WORK OUT MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC ARRANGEENTS, THUS FAR WE SEE LITTLE CARRYOVER INTO POLITICAL FIELD. THIS YEAR' S GREEK EMBASSY NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION ATTRACTED A SOMEWHAT LARGER SOVIET TURNOUT THAN LAST YEAR, BUT RANKING SOVIET OFFICIAL WAS ON SAME LEVEL AS IN 1972 AND OUR GREEK COLLEAGUES ARE CAUTIOUS ABOUT READING TOO MUCH INTO LATEST SIGNS. MEANWHILE, SOVIET PRESS CONTINUES TO HARP ON ALLEGED ATHENS INTRIGUES IN CYPRUS AND NO OPPORTUNITY IS LOST TO CONDEMN US NAVAL TIES AND TREATMENT OF POLITICAL DISSIDENTS IN GREECE. NEW TIMES ARTICLE, THEREFORE, LOOKS TO US MORE LIKE PART OF GENERAL SOVIET EFFORT TO CREATE APPROPRIATE ATMOSPHERE FOR COMING EUROPEAN CONFERENCE THAN INDICATION OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ATTITUDE TOWARD PAPADOPOULOS REGIME. THIS VIEW IS SUPPORTED BY MARCH 23 IZVESTIYA ARTICLE ON GREEK NATIONAL DAY WHICH MAKES NO REFERENCE TO IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS BUT AGAIN EMPHASIZES TALKS IN HELSINKI AND MBFR TALKS IN VIENNA AS OPENING WAY FOR GREECE TO MAKE CONTRIBUTION TO EASING TENSIONS IN EUROPE. WE NOTE ALSO THAT THEME ABOUT GREEK ROLE IN EASING EUROPEAN TENSIONS IS OLD ONE ALREADY SOUNDED IN LAST YEAR' S PRAVDA ARTICLE COMMENORATING GREEK NATIONAL DAY WHICH MENTIONED MOSCOW' S DESIRE FOR EUROPEAN CONFIDENTIAL

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SECURITY CONFERENCE AND CALLED ATHENS " TO DO ITS BIT."

5. WE DO NOT, OF COURSE, DISCOUNT A READINESS ON MOSCOW' S PART TO MOVE FOR BETTER POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH ATHENS, PARTICULARLY NOW THAT THE CHINESE HAVE ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH GREECE. INDEED MOSCOW' S READINESS FOR BETTER RELATIONS HAS BEEN STANDARD THEME IN SOVIET PRESS FOR SOME YEARS. AS IN THE PAST, HOWEVER, MOSCOW' S POLICY OF TYING SUCH IMPROVEMENT TO FUTURE BEHAVIOR OF GREEK GOVERNMENT IN MATTERS OF CONCERN TO USSE KEEPS BALL IN ATHENS' COURT, AND PUTS ONUS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR CURRENT STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS ON GREEKS. EMBASSY IS NOT OF COURSE IN POSITION TO JUDGE WHAT STEPS ATHENS IS PREPARED TO TAKE, IF ANY, ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FRONT TO IMPROVE POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW, BUT WE ARE INTRIGUED BY GREEK PRESS TREATMENT OF SUCH SENSITIVE ISSUE.
DUBS

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